



# **Volunteer Handbook**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to Rockbridge County Schools. We are honored that you are considering volunteering in our schools. We are always looking for community members to join our team in the challenging and exciting work of educating Rockbridge County students.

Your experience, expertise, knowledge and skills are valuable and we are ready to put those to good use in meeting the needs of our children. The gift of time with a caring adult role model is powerful in making a difference in a child's educational career and life beyond school. We hope you gain as much from your experience as our students do.

**SCHOOLS NOW HAVE A VISITOR COMPUTER PROGRAM IN THE MAIN OFFICE. UPON EACH ARRIVAL, PLEASE SIGN-IN.**

**PLEASE WEAR YOUR BADGE WHILE IN THE BUILDING**

## **Volunteers Can Serve in Many Capacities**

The Rockbridge County School Board and administrators recognize that volunteers can make a valuable contribution to the educational program of a school. However, the administration and teachers are responsible for the education of students and these responsibilities cannot be delegated. Therefore, volunteers work under the direct supervision of the principals and teachers who retain the responsibility for the instruction and supervision of their students.

Parents, community members, college students, professionals, and civic groups can enrich the education of students. The schools welcome volunteers from these individuals and groups to share their expertise in areas that may include (among other activities):

- Assisting teachers in short term projects in the classroom such as special art projects, science projects...
- Assisting in the office with copying newsletters, special mailings, papers for teachers
- Listening to students read
- Reading aloud to classes
- Assisting with a "Book Buddies" program
- Helping in the library with shelving books, unpacking and cataloging book orders
- Assisting with special school projects such as Book Fairs, Fun Days, assisting with preparations for special music or theatrical programs
- Provide talks to students on special areas of expertise
- Teach elementary students a foreign language
- Assemble collections of materials for the teaches, PTA, or for special programs
- Support students in reading practice and homework after school
- Providing special programs for students such as "photography", drama or story writing for a group of students

- Assisting during computer projects

## **Volunteers and Confidentiality**

Information about a student must never be discussed beyond the school walls. Student information will only be shared as necessary for the volunteer experience to be effective and never include information that is considered confidential or sensitive in nature without a parent's permission. Volunteers must respect the confidentiality of student information at all times. If the volunteer becomes aware of information that affects the safety of a child, the volunteer must notify the principal or their designee.

Permanent records, data base information (TEMS) are available to professional staff only. Volunteers may not have access to students' permanent records.

## **Volunteer Qualifications and Requirements**

Volunteers should be warm, friendly and respect the individual differences of children. They must also have the ability to work well with others and accept the direction of the staff of the school.

All volunteers must complete the application and information agreement. A copy of the agreement is at the back of this handbook. This form requires you to disclose past legal history, if any, and to provide contact and emergency information. Upon entering the school building, all visitors must sign in and wear your name badge when working in the school building.

Volunteers must be dependable and understand that volunteering requires a commitment. Students look forward to working with volunteers and are very disappointed when an adult does not follow through on their commitment. Volunteers, like all adults in the schools are role models for students. We expect everyone in the school building to respect the rights, talents and time of others.

The school calendar is included in this handbook. If weather threatens to interfere with school, listen to local radio stations, or check the Rockbridge County Schools website (<http://www.rockbridge.k12.va.us>) for cancellations or delays. **If your absence is necessary, please call the school as early as possible and ask that the teacher be notified about the cancellation. This is more critical if the child's transportation arrangements must be altered.**

Volunteers are asked to dress appropriately for the activity planned keeping in mind their job as a role model for students. If you have any questions about appropriate dress please talk with the principal or volunteer coordinator.

Volunteers need to be able to focus on their task; therefore, volunteers cannot bring their children with them to school while they volunteer.

## **Working as a Team Member**

It is important that all adults working with students function as a team. All activities in the school are under the ultimate direction of the principal. The principal may designate a volunteer coordinator such as the *Guidance Counselor*, a classroom teacher or program coordinator to work directly with volunteer assignments and activities. The principal and/or coordinator will orient volunteers to the school building, and share expectations for activities, as well as plan for activities and for spaces for volunteers.

It is critical that volunteers become aware of the classroom expectations and rules of the school in order to maintain consistent expectations for students. Teachers will provide detailed instructions concerning activities and expectations to volunteers who work with students. Volunteers that use computers in their activities in the school will be expected to understand and sign the *Computer Use Agreement* of the County. Please see the building principal for a copy of this form for your review and signature.

## **Tips for volunteers working with students:**

- Be a good listener
- Get to know your student(s)
- Let your student know you enjoy what you are doing
- Be a positive role model through your respectful interactions with students and adults
- Look for ways to genuinely praise students' accomplishments, progress and hard work. Whenever possible phrase your comments to be specific about a child's accomplishment. "You completed every homework assignment and are prepared for class" gives a student more helpful feedback.
- Recognize that for some students what appears easy may be difficult, give them time to work through the problem... saying "this is easy" may actually make the student feel defeated if indeed they do not find the work "easy". Congratulate them for "working hard to complete the addition problems".
- Be patient, everyone learns at their own pace
- Remember that your interest and enthusiasm may be one of the most important parts of a student's day
- Try some of these phrases to encourage students
  - "That shows a great deal of work"
  - "I like the way you explained that"
  - "Good thinking"
  - "Congratulations"
  - "You're on the right track"

"That's quite an improvement"

"That's a good point"

"I appreciate your help"

"It looks like you put a lot of work into this"

"This paper shows how hard you are working"

"You showed a great deal of creativity in painting this"

Rockbridge County Schools thanks you for considering volunteering your time to our schools. We hope that the experience is positive for you, the students and staff members you work along side. This is exciting and rewarding work. We are glad you are joining us.

Remember that schools require that ALL visitors to the school enter through the school office, sign in and wear a badge that identifies you. Please follow this process each time you enter a school even if you are a regular visitor.

Thank you



